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Squirrel Cage

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A GOOD DAY to you all, and particularly to American lady spies abroad. What I mean is, we hope they remember to be ladies at all times. This is a season for rewarding spies. A Russian television program recently



glorified the exploits of Col. Rudolph I. Abel and disclosed that he had been decorated for spying in the United States. Our government, not to be outdone, then disclosed that we have granted the CIA medal to Francis Gary Powers who came down while spying OVER Russia. Then, Russia named a street after Richard Sorge, another spy,

Mr. Welch and how we are going to top that I can't imagine. But the significant thing about this succession of incidents, I think, is that neither country has yet seen fit to reward a lady spy. The truth is we use our lady spies until they become old and gray and fat and then we turn them out without pensions, in their threadbare finery, into a world for which there is no longer any use for their talents. All they have is their memories, oh, boy, oh, boy, oh, boy!—and the occasional regret that they didn't latch on to some passing notable instead of betraying him.

A woman gives us the best years of her life catching her death of cold in low-cut evening gowns in drafty European parlors, drinking champagne until her liver turns to stone, pushing Balkan diplomats out of train compartment windows into tunnels until she has muscles like a blacksmith. Then we call her in and tell her that she has tell-tale wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, that her waist is no longer tiny, and that the hands that once stroked a sultan's brow are no longer lovely as a schoolgirl's.

"We can't use you any more, Desdemona," says her CIA chief. "Here are a few addresses up in Darien, Conn., where I am told you can apply for housework, if you can cook, wash, make beds, dust, care for children and mow the lawn." And our faded, one-time glamorous American lady spy, the toast of the Orient Express, says: "Thanks a heap, Charlie. I'll keep my CIA good-conduct discharge framed over my bed in my

But down the hall somebody is naming a Western mountain after a MAN spy who served less time, made fewer discoveries and wasn't once called upon in the line of duty to kiss a man with a beard.

A prominent former British spy, Col. T. H. Dravus-Holt, who I am just now making up out of whole cloth—twice, actually—says in his memoirs "It Takes One to Know One" that the United States has notoriously treated its lady spies shabbily. On the old Orient Express American lady spies invariably were to be found in the day coaches and second-class cars instead of in the luxurious first-class room cars, and they subsisted on box lunches, he says, instead of the sumptuous fare in the dining car.

"I shall never forget," he said, "or I shan't soon forget—let's see now, what was I going to say? Oh, yes, I shan't forget the sight of one of America's top spies, lovely Desdemona Larkin, sitting in an immigrant car in a nine-year-old ball gown, nibbling on a salami and a yard long loaf of bread, while the rest of us were eating fatted calf in the diner. I understand Desdemona is now retired and doing housework somewhere in Connecticut."

The colonel remembers that Desdemona was traveling on a per diem of \$12 a day, which was barely enough to get her into the Y.W.C.A. and meant that she had to forego lunch unless she came upon a fellow spy with a more generous allowance and nothing better to do at the moment than feed her. "The only time she lived well," the colonel says, "was when she could pick up summer work on the side and become a double agent filling in for spies who were on their holidays. I remember one summer she was spying on Israel for America, on America for Israel, and on the No. 2 company in the car-rental field for the No. 1 company, mostly looking for dirty ashtrays."